

CHAPTER NINETEEN

ZION'S CAMP: A STUDY IN OBEDIENCE, THEN AND NOW

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The first Latter-day Saints to arrive in Independence, Jackson County, Missouri, were the missionaries to the Lamanites, arriving probably in late January 1831. In July 1831 Church leaders visited Jackson County, Missouri, and the Lord identified Independence as the center place of Zion (see D&C 57), suggesting a spot of great historical significance and one of future Church importance. Within weeks, several groups were called to Independence to settle the region, including the Colesville Branch of Latter-day Saints from New York, who arrived in the latter part of July 1831, and other converts from New York and Kirtland, Ohio. Within the next two years, hundreds of Latter-day Saints likewise settled in Independence, Missouri, eager, it seems, to harvest blessings by virtue of being in an area rich in spiritual heritage.

All did not go well for the settlers, however. As time passed, boastful and overzealous colonizers tended to anger the old settlers with unnecessary claims that the land had been given to Latter-day Saints through divine favor and that others would be removed by force, if necessary, to fulfill the Lord's promises for the region. The old settlers resisted and resorted to a show of force in an unsuccessful effort to intimidate the Mormons. When they did not respond to the satisfaction of the Jackson County Missourians, mob violence erupted in

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1833, and by November the Latter-day Saints were forcibly removed from their homes and lands.

THE NEED FOR ZION'S CAMP

The violent expulsion of Latter-day Saints from their homes and lands in Jackson County, Missouri, precipitated the need for specific action. The action that ultimately came was a force of Saints organized militarily but for the most part without formal experience; that group is referred to in Church history as Zion's Camp. Mobs, bent on brutality and destruction despite the organization of Zion's Camp, publicized their intent to drive all Latter-day Saints beyond the Missouri borders.

Church leaders in Kirtland, specifically the Prophet Joseph Smith, sought assistance from the courts, from the Missouri governor, from the president of the United States, and from other parties whose sympathies may have favored the Mormon position. By mid-December, the Prophet Joseph had received a revelation (D&C 101) that outlined the reasons why the Lord had allowed the Saints to be expelled from their homes and lands, a timetable for what must be done before they could redeem their personal property, and specific instructions for the Saints to rectify the situation. An important part of this revelation was a parable depicting the plight of the Missouri Saints. Referred to since as the parable of the nobleman (see D&C 101:43–64), the parable described specifically the literal and ultimate redemption of the Latter-day Saints to their rightful place.

Sidney B. Sperry's insights into the meaning of the parable are valuable. In his *Compendium* he noted: "It would seem that the parable is to be interpreted in this way: the nobleman is the Lord, whose choice land in His vineyard is Zion in Missouri. The places where the Saints live in Zion are the olive trees. The servants are the Latter-day Saint settlers, and the watchmen are their officers in the Church. While yet building in Zion, they become at variance with each other and do not build the tower or Temple whose site had been dedicated as early as 3 August 1831. Had they built it as directed, it would have been a spiritual refuge for them, for from it the Lord's watchmen could have seen by revelation the movements of the enemy from afar. This foreknowledge would have saved them and their hard work when the enemy made his assault.

“But the Saints in Missouri were slothful, lax, and asleep. The enemy came, and the Missouri persecutions were the result. The Lord’s people were scattered and much of their labors wasted. The Almighty rebuked His people, as we have already seen, but He commanded one of His servants (vs. 55), Joseph Smith (103:21), to gather the ‘strength of mine house’ and rescue His lands and possessions gathered against them.

“Subsequently, the Prophet and his brethren in the famous Zion’s Camp did go to Missouri in 1834 in an attempt to carry out the terms of the parable. Before they went, additional revelation was received (see 103:21–28) concerning the redemption of Zion. The brethren were instructed to try to buy land in Missouri, not to use force; and if the enemy came against them, they were to bring a curse upon them. Zion was not redeemed at that time, but we may look for it in the not-too-distant future. Verily, it will be redeemed when the Lord wills it.”¹

Although given as instruction to the Church, the revelation was published and distributed to others, including Missouri governor Daniel Dunklin. A part of the parable carried a promise of armed redemption from Church leaders and members in Kirtland, Ohio, to the exiled Jackson County Saints: “And the lord of the vineyard said unto one of his servants: Go and gather together the residue of my servants, and take all the strength of mine house, which are my warriors, my young men, and they that are of middle age also among all my servants, who are the strength of mine house, save those only whom I have appointed to tarry;

“And go ye straightway unto the land of my vineyard, and redeem my vineyard; for it is mine; I have bought it with money.

“Therefore, get ye straightway unto my land; break down the walls of mine enemies; throw down their tower, and scatter their watchmen” (D&C 101:55–57).

By mid-December, the Prophet Joseph responded to Church members’ concerns by saying that “he was going to Zion, to assist in redeeming it.” He called for a sustaining vote of the council in Kirtland to support his decision, which was given; and in response to his request for volunteers to assist him, thirty or forty of the men of the council agreed to go.²

Later that same day, the Lord revealed to the Prophet Joseph spe-

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cific instructions relating to the formation and execution of the march to be taken by Zion's Camp (see D&C 103). This revelation provided the Prophet and the Church with such detailed information as the number of participants the Lord expected (see D&C 103:30–34), the demographic makeup of the expedition (see D&C 103:21–22), how the group was to be financed (see D&C 103:23), how the force was to be organized (see D&C 103:30–31), and who its principal leaders were to be (see D&C 103:35–40).

Initially, Zion's Camp was intended to protect the rights of the Latter-day Saints after the state militia made possible the return of the exiles to their confiscated homes and other property. Before the Saints could complete their recruiting, financing, and purchasing of supplies for the camp, however, the Missouri governor reconsidered involving the state militia in the operation. Governor Dunklin, who in November 1833 had suggested such a military organization on the part of the Church, waffled because of public outcry. Dunklin ultimately withdrew his support for involving any state military force.

Meanwhile, the Saints' preparations continued, and Mormon recruits departed from Kirtland in the main body of Zion's Camp on May 5, 1834. The leaders of Zion's Camp did not learn that Governor Dunklin had reversed his position until the expedition was underway. Upon his arrival at the Mississippi River, Elder Parley P. Pratt recalled: "We had an interview with the Governor, who readily acknowledged the justice of the demand, but frankly told us he dare not attempt the execution of the laws in that respect, for fear of deluging the whole country in civil war and bloodshed. He advised us to relinquish our rights, for the sake of peace, and to sell our lands from which we had been driven."³

As well intentioned as the governor may have been in this affair, it is apparent that he did not understand the position of the Latter-day Saints. Had Jackson County not been designated as the center place of Zion and the gathering place for the Saints, it would have been less of a sacrifice for the Saints to leave; in fact, the Saints would likely not have settled there to start with. But the Lord had so declared and the Saints had been obedient to settle the region in 1831 and to buy the land, which gave them legal right to their property. That was all according to instruction from the Lord to the earliest Saints who settled in the area of Independence, Jackson County,

Missouri: "But unto him that keepeth my commandments I will give the mysteries of my kingdom, and the same shall be in him a well of living water, springing up unto everlasting life. And now, behold, this is the will of the Lord your God concerning his saints, that they should assemble themselves together unto the land of Zion, not in haste, lest there should be confusion, which bringeth pestilence" (D&C 63:23–24).

The protection of the state militia was necessary to enforce the return of the exiled Saints to their homes in Missouri; without it, the Church paramilitary force could not ensure their safety. The politically expedient change in the governor's position had to do with the Missourians' intense feelings against the Saints. Their united bitterness exacerbated the situation, for many in the state's militia were also antagonists in the Mormon relocation question. Without the support of the state's chief executive or the militia he commanded, there was little left for the Church leaders and Zion's Camp participants to do except disband and return to their homes. They did not do so, however, until the Prophet received a revelation (D&C 105) on June 22, 1834, that the Lord accepted the sacrifice of the Saints and deferred the redemption of Zion to a later date. The disbanding of the camp came on June 25, less than six months after hostilities necessitated its creation and after a march of eight hundred to a thousand miles from Kirtland to Clay County. The camp members' hardships were severe. Hunger, thirst, unseasonable cold, disease, milk sickness, and inadequate dress combined to create suffering.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF ZION'S CAMP

Because Zion's Camp was dissolved before achieving its expressed objectives, the whole mission has been labeled a failure by many authors from 1834 to the present. Nonetheless, the expedition made numerous lasting contributions to the Church. The following are but some of those contributions.

Doctrines and teachings. A great deal of official Church doctrine came as a result of the instructions the Lord gave for the organization of Zion's Camp. Doctrine and Covenants 101, 103, and 105 are replete with insights on such doctrinal themes as obedience, patience, testing, trust in the Lord, sacrifice, mankind's dependence upon the Lord, God's intervention in mankind's dealings, signs of

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the Second Coming of the Lord, millennial conditions on the earth, the judgments of God upon the earth, continuing instructions concerning the establishment of Zion, characteristics of a Zion people, and the divine involvement in the establishment of the United States Constitution. Numerous other instructions were also given, including revelation to assist with the challenges facing the Latter-day Saints in Missouri. All of this comforted, encouraged, and brought hope to the hearts of Latter-day Saints who desired to learn from their experiences.

Obedience and sacrifice. Although perhaps not fully recognized as such by its participants, one purpose of Zion's Camp was to determine who would be obedient to the Lord's counsel. Obedience often includes sacrifice, and sacrifice is not divinely recognized without obedience to eternal laws. (Saul learned from the Lord that obedience is far better than sacrifice; see 1 Samuel 15:22). The experience of traveling to Missouri was a test for each of the camp's participants. Many failed a part of the test through willful disobedience; in other words, they did not realize all that was potentially theirs if they had been obedient. Although some failed because of their attitude and—unwillingness to be taught, the only real losers were those who refused to go when called to serve. If there was failure in Zion's Camp, it was attributable in part to lack of support from Church members. Elder B. H. Roberts wrote, "Had the Saints in the eastern branches had more faith—faith to send up to Zion more men and more money with which to strengthen the hands of the Saints . . . the history of Zion's Camp might have been different."⁴

Additional Church members were needed, but some had good reasons to stay behind. Dennis Lake and Albert Miner drew straws to determine who would go to Missouri and who would stay home to care for both of their families. Lake went with Zion's Camp. When he returned, disenchanted with the experience, he apostatized. Apparently he was so bitter that he later sued the Prophet for sixty dollars, the value of the three months' work that he had missed. Elder Brigham Young was unable to pacify Lake, but as a part of his official assignment, he told Brother Miner, "he would receive his blessings" as a result of his staying home and doing his part. That greatly satisfied Brother Miner.⁵

It appears that from the outset some participants understood the

higher principles that brought them together. Others went simply because they were asked to go. Nonetheless, those individuals went, whereas others elected not to.

Brother Nathan Bennett Baldwin's journal entry revealed a higher law for participation. He spoke of consecrating that which he owned to the service of the Lord, as did others.⁶ Levi Hancock wrote, "Our money was then thrown together."⁷ The law of consecration was first revealed to the Church in February 1831 (see D&C 42:3034), only three years before the calling of Zion's Camp. Furthermore, some areas of the Church in Ohio and in Missouri practiced this law. It is interesting, therefore, to note the references to individual participation as a result of obedience to that particular law.

Various reasons were given by other men for their failure to go. But when the Prophet chided one man, "Now that you have a wife, don't say you can't go," the man responded: "I said my wife shan't hinder me and went and bought me a rifle and sword. I armed myself for battle." His wife's support continued during his absence. He wrote later: "My wife had managed to get along with the baby without running me in debt. Some had to pay many dollars for their wives debts. I felt thankful for this and loved her dearly."⁸

A more significant contribution is a principle usually overlooked about these individuals who accompanied the Prophet: all the individuals went with the realization that their lives could be forfeited for the gospel cause, yet they were obedient to the call.

On May 4, 1834, the Prophet spoke in Kirtland to the assembled Saints, many of whom would shortly become members of Zion's Camp. "He impressed upon them the necessity of being humble, exercising faith and patience and living in obedience to the commands of the Almighty, and not murmur at the dispensations of Providence. He bore testimony of the truth of the work which God had revealed through him and promised the brethren that if they all would live as they should, before the Lord, keeping His commandments, and not, like the children of Israel murmur against the Lord and His servants, they should all safely return and not one of them should fall upon the mission they were about to undertake, for if they were united and exercised faith, God would deliver them out of the hands of their enemies, but should they, like the children of Israel, forget God and His promises and treat lightly His command-

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ments, He would visit them in His wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure."⁹

True to the Prophet's promise to the Saints, the Lord did protect them, usually in ways that they could not comprehend. One of the best examples of divine intervention came in mid-June on the banks of the Big and Little Fishing Rivers. The camp had been under constant threat of attack from Missourians who had assembled to destroy the Mormon marchers. On the morning of Thursday, June 19, an agitated black woman warned Luke Johnson that a large company was planning to destroy the Mormon camp. A farmer confirmed the report later that day. The camp hastily moved forward, believing that they could receive assistance from Latter-day Saints in Clay County, Missouri, but several incidents hindered their progress: a wagon broke down and had to be repaired before the camp could proceed, and the wheels ran off at least two others. None of the delays was particularly significant in itself, but combined, they hampered progress significantly.

Zion's Camp was forced to stop "on an elevated piece of land between the forks of the Big and Little Fishing Rivers." While the main group pitched their tents, five members of the mob rode across the river and threatened the Saints that they would "see hell before morning."¹⁰ Shortly thereafter it began raining. It rained in torrents throughout the night, "the thunder and lightning exceeded all description."¹¹ Heber C. Kimball related that there was continual lightning throughout the night, bright enough to see to pick up a pin. Another account suggests that small hail fell in the camp;¹² many others indicate that hail the size of eggs fell only outside camp. Many of the brethren took refuge in a local church house, but others remained in their tents. Their enemies hid under wagons. One of the mob was reportedly killed by lightning, and another's hand was torn off by a fractious horse frightened by the storm.¹³ Tree limbs as large as four inches in diameter were torn from trees. The storm disorganized the Missourians, which curtailed their achieving their destructive objectives. They left, having failed in their intent to destroy Zion's Camp.

Many of the camp members perceived the terrible storm to be providential intervention. Nathan B. Baldwin recorded: "The Lord had previously said He would fight the battles of His Saints; and it

seemed as though the mandate of heaven had gone forth from his presence to apply the artillery of heaven in defense of his servants. Some small hail fell in the camp but from a half mile to one mile around, we were told by inhabitants that the hail stones were as big as tumblers; and the appearance of their destructiveness showed that their size was not overestimated. Limbs of trees were broken off, fence rails were marred and splintered, and the growing corn was cut down into shreds. But the casualties were all on the side of our enemies."¹⁴

Elder George A. Smith further declared: "I have ever felt thankful to my Heavenly Father that He by this storm and sudden rise of the streams prevented our having a bloody conflict with our enemies, who were thereby prevented from attacking us." The stream rose to a depth of between thirty and forty feet. After leaving camp and seeing the destruction caused by the severe hailstorm, the brethren once again prayerfully expressed gratitude for their divine preservation.¹⁵

Like the children of Israel, members of Zion's Camp were sobered by the experience and repentant, and they did better for a time. But, like the Nephites, they regressed from sincere repentance and the blessing of improved conditions to murmuring and complaining, again to be rebuked and chastened by the Lord until they returned to a more humble, teachable condition. Neither was the value of their experience lost on those who intended to destroy the Saints after the rise of the river. Wilford Woodruff reported that the captain of the mob noted how strange it was that nothing could be done against the Mormons but that some calamity prevented them from being successful. Elder Woodruff editorialized, "But they did not feel disposed to acknowledge that God was fighting our battles."¹⁶

Others, however, did make such an acknowledgment: "They [the mob] declared that if that was the way God fought for the Mormons, they [themselves] might as well go about their business."¹⁷ A Colonel Sconce also remarked, "I see that there is an Almighty power that protects this people, for I started from Richmond, Ray county, with a company of armed men, having a fixed determination to destroy you, but was kept back by the storm."¹⁸

The Saints learned again that the chastening hand of God is a great blessing to His people. With the numbers of the assembled mob

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and the comparative weakness of the camp, little but divine intervention could have kept the mob from destroying the Saints.

Despite these warnings, many participants failed to follow the Prophet's advice. Repeatedly through the Zion's Camp march, the Prophet had to warn, exhort, reprimand, and encourage the participants to greater faithfulness. He reminded them of their duty; he encouraged their obedience; and he chastised them for their laxness in keeping the commandments. Through it all, many listened and as a result believed, and their view of spiritual things expanded. Others picked up a few truths and were better for their effort but did not live up to their potential. And still others, like Brother Dennis Lake, felt their time was wasted and even heaped future indignation upon themselves by creating dissension within the Church and apostatizing.

Some Church members apostatized because the Prophet instructed the Camp of Israel to take up arms. "They did not believe it right to arm themselves, or fight in self defense."¹⁹ Luke Johnson, on the other hand, though he believed it wrong to take up arms, nevertheless was obedient and followed the Prophet. He recorded: "May 1st 1834 I started with some of the brethren for Missouri for the 1st time [in my life] that I had consented to take firearms to go into the field of battle."²⁰

Some camp members complained about the lack of bread at mealtime,²¹ about the butter, the meat, the horses or the lack of them, about the company they were forced to keep, and about almost every other imaginable problem. Others endured every privation, every setback, every challenge and opportunity with self-respect and fortitude.

Through it all, the Prophet was reassuring, correcting, and pacifying many of the men. On Saturday, May 17, the Prophet warned that "they would meet with misfortunes, difficulties and hindrances as the certain result of giving way to such a [rebellious and contentious] spirit and said, 'you will know it before you leave this place.' He exhorted them to humble themselves before the Lord and become united, that they might not be scourged."²²

When the camp awakened the next morning, they discovered that almost every horse in the camp was foundered, a debilitating condition often caused by overfeeding. The condition hindered movement by the animal, but movement was essential to the animal's survival.

When the Prophet Joseph realized the condition of their horses, he said to the men "that for a witness that God overruled and had His eye upon them, all those who would humble themselves before the Lord, should know that the hand of God was in this misfortune, and their horses should be restored to health immediately."²³ Most of the men complied, and "by noon the same day, the horses were as nimble as ever." One man who had a "rebellious spirit" and would not be humbled found his horse dead soon afterward. Such experiences for the camp were numerous and poignant, teaching the brethren their duty and responsibility to the Lord.²⁴

Within days of the experience on the Fishing Rivers, another example of divine protection unfolded but once again neither its severity nor its final result could have been anticipated. Partially as a result of disobedience, contention, and murmurings within the camp and partially because of the further need for protection from the mobs, the Camp of Israel was smitten with the dreaded cholera. Cholera is a gastrointestinal disorder that causes severe cramping, vomiting, and a weakening of the victim because of the inability to keep down or process nutrients. Hyrum Smith indicated that "it seized [us] like the talons of a hawk."²⁵

Joseph Bates Noble was stricken but lived to share the following description of his painful ordeal: "I there was violently seized with the Cholera, vomiting and purging powerfully, then cramping from head to foot in the most powerful manner, with a burning fever in my bowels. In this situation I lay forty hours, my voice and my hearing had nearly left me. While in this situation, Bros. Brigham Young, [and others] . . . prayed for me. . . . While praying in this situation the veil became very thin between me and my God and I noticed things that I never before thought of. Such was the blessing of God upon me that I nearly had an open vision. Through the faith of my brethren that was exercised for me, I got up and with their assistance put on my clothes. . . . Never had I experienced such manifestations of the blessings of God as at this time."²⁶

Cholera struck quickly. George A. Smith recorded that "many of the brethren were violently attacked . . . some falling to the ground while they were on guard."²⁷ The disease spread quickly in the unsanitary conditions and, not uncommonly, by and to those who cared for those already infected. The numbers reported of casualties from

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the disease in Zion's Camp vary. Most sources suggest thirteen or fourteen; one indicates that as many as twenty died from the disease. Burial was quick because of the rapid decomposition of the bodies. Many wrote of this incident, regretting that they couldn't do more for their fallen comrades. Joseph Bates Noble, who had been caring for his dear friend, Elbur Wilcox, lamented: "Never in my life did I feel to mourn like as on this occasion. I was sensible that a strong chord of friendship bound us together, but I did not know that our hearts were so completely knit together as they were."²⁸ Heber C. Kimball wrote, "We felt to sit and weep over our brethren, and so great was our sorrow that we could have washed them with our tears."²⁹

Three weeks earlier, the Prophet had warned the camp of repercussions from their disobedience: "The Lord had revealed to me that a scourge would come upon the camp in consequence of the fractious and unruly spirits that appeared among them, and they should die like sheep with the rot."³⁰ He further said that "the scourge must come; repentance and humility may mitigate the chastisement, but cannot altogether arrest it."³¹

One bright spot in an otherwise dismal situation was that the mob's fear of the sickness kept them at bay. Elder Heber C. Kimball noted: "This was our situation, the enemies around us, and the destroyer in our midst."³² Six months later, in conversation with some of the veterans of the march, the Prophet Joseph indicated he had received a vision of those who had given their lives as a part of Zion's Camp. "I have seen those men who died of the cholera in our camp; and the Lord knows, if I get a mansion as bright as theirs, I ask no more." As the Prophet shared this experience, he wept and was unable to speak for some time.³³

MISSIONARY LABORS

Another aspect of Zion's Camp has long been neglected and usually completely omitted: the missionary efforts of Zion's Camp participants. Missionary work has been characterized as the lifeblood of the Church. Rarely will you find assembled Latter-day Saints who are not affecting the lives of others, either as examples of Christlike living or in active proselyting efforts. Zion's Camp was no exception. Three brief examples will suffice, although others are available.

The old wagon road that Zion's Camp was to travel through Missouri passed immediately by the three hundred twenty acres of William Adams Hickman, approximately eleven miles east of Huntsville, Missouri, near present-day Missouri State Highway 24. Hickman was a prosperous young farmer, only about twenty years old. He and his wife, Bernetta, noted the approach of Zion's Camp with interest. Although there was an air of secrecy surrounding the advancing company, it was extremely difficult to hide the identity of such a large contingent of fighting men. Hickman and his wife knew the camp's identity and were hospitable to the weary marchers when they arrived.

Bernetta's brother, Greenlief Burchardt, also knew who they were, but he was antagonistic and even hostile toward the camp. Apparently the differences of opinion between the two men were expressed, and in the passion of the moment, William Hickman challenged his brother-in-law Greenlief to a fistfight in defense of his right to entertain the Mormons on his farm. There is no evidence that the fight ever took place, but there is reason to believe that William and Bernetta treated the Mormon marchers kindly. Sources suggest that the Hickmans invited some of the marchers into their home for dinner, and evidence shows that the Mormons received fresh water, a scarce commodity, from their benefactors' well.

Undoubtedly as a result of this early introduction and apparently strengthened by the defense of the members of Zion's Camp, William Adams Hickman, Bernetta Burchardt Hickman, and their young family threw in their lot with the Latter-day Saints by being baptized members of the Church. During the expulsion of the Mormons from Missouri in 1838, the Hickmans sold their spacious farm and joined the Saints in Commerce, Illinois.³⁴

Nathan and John Joshua Tanner traveled with Zion's Camp. They heard the Prophet Joseph prophesy, teach, and exhort the Saints to faithfulness. They saw him act in his prophetic role and recognized the significance of his teaching. Their father, the venerable John Tanner, a recent convert himself, "put in very near half the money that paid the expenses of Zion's Camp."³⁵

Upon their arrival in Missouri and the ultimate disbanding of Zion's Camp, the two younger Tanners remained for a time in the land of Zion before attempting to return to Kirtland. Even though

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there was plenty of money at home, the two ran into financial trouble on the return journey. Fiscally embarrassed, they relied on the kindness of the local citizenry. Nathan and John attempted to find work, but wet weather prevented their consistent employment. They continued toward home until they were literally down to their last dime. A local farmer named Eldredge inquired where they were from and where they were going. Upon their reply the inquisitor said, "Then I take it you are Mormons" and invited them to dinner. At the end of the meal Eldredge presented them with a sizable contribution to help them home. They refused it and instead offered to borrow the money if their benefactor would trust them to send it back upon their arrival home. Eldredge indicated he would be in their region during the coming fall and would collect his money then.

The young men continued their journey, and within a few weeks the farmer visited the John Tanner home and stayed two weeks. In addition to receiving his money, Eldredge and his son John were baptized members of the restored Church. But the story does not end there. As a result of contact with returning members of Zion's Camp, the gospel was taken to the rest of the widowed farmer's family: at least one other son, Horace S. Eldredge, embraced the faith of the Latter-day Saints. Horace became a general authority in 1854, and he was also a successful Utah merchant, marshall, brigadier general in the Utah militia, legislator, banker, and twice a financial agent and emigration representative for the Church in the East.³⁶

William Taylor was also a farmer by trade. He moved his large family from Bowling Green, Kentucky, to Clay County, Missouri. Taylor purchased six hundred forty acres of rich farmland between the forks of the Big and Little Fishing Rivers. This was the area of Clay County where the camp stopped to repair the wagons during the horrific storm that protected the Saints.

The raised levels of the Little and Big Fishing Rivers that protected the Saints likewise prevented them from continuing their journey. Throughout Saturday and Sunday, the Zion's Camp marchers were obliged to remain there. Many of the marchers were forced to seek shelter in the local Baptist meeting house. Later, they also learned that it was the house of worship for William Taylor, his family, and many of his neighbors. On Sunday morning, June 21, the worship-

pers assembled and, finding Camp members already there, encouraged them to preach. The gospel was taught. "Having heard one sermon, William Taylor was converted." Before the camp moved on the following Tuesday (June 22), William Taylor, his wife, Elizabeth, eight of their fourteen children, and some eighteen others were baptized in the same river that four days earlier had held the persecutors at bay. "Two days after meeting Joseph Smith, William Taylor manifested his confidence in the Prophet by fitting up his own son and his son in law with provisions, munitions, and equipment to [themselves] become members of Zion's camp."³⁷ He was ordained an elder and soon thereafter proselyted for the Church.

Descendants of the Taylor family, like those of the Eldredge and Hickman families, are still in the Church. John Taylor of Snowflake, Arizona, is a great-grandson of William. John, like many other family members, continues the legacy of faith and devotion begun by William and Elizabeth in 1834. John has been a bishop, stake president, and mission president, and currently serves as a patriarch. His civic career is no less distinguished. Yet, who could know in 1834 that the example and teachings of faithful Latter-day Saint marchers could create a legacy of adherence to the saving principles of the gospel. As a result of the Prophet's teachings then, Saints today are likewise benefited and blessed by that experience.

THE SANCTITY OF LIFE

On numerous occasions the Prophet Joseph was compelled to rebuke the members of Zion's Camp for their carelessness of the value of life. In Elder George A. Smith's reminiscence, for example, at least seven incidents were noted between men and rattlesnakes. Apparently the natural tendency of the men was to destroy the reptile and be done with the threat. The Prophet repeatedly upbraided the brethren: "How will the serpent ever lose his venom, while the servants of God possess the same disposition, and continue to make war on it? Men must become harmless, before the brute creation; and when men lose their vicious dispositions and cease to destroy the animal race, the lion and the lamb can dwell together."³⁸

The teaching of the Prophet Joseph apparently had some effect, because in several future episodes the men carefully relocated unwanted serpents from their immediate campsites. Solomon

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Humphrey, being older than many of the camp members, became fatigued by the exertion of the march and the heat of the day. Humphrey lay down and napped but upon his awakening found a large rattlesnake coiled just a short distance from his head. Some of the men hurried to his rescue, bent on killing the snake, but Humphrey, undoubtedly remembering the earlier counsel of the Prophet, rebuffed his protectors, exclaiming, "No, I'll protect him [the snake]; you shan't hurt him, for he and I had a good nap together."³⁹ In addition to the comic relief that the experience provided in a tense situation, it further suggests that some were "hearing" and taking seriously the counsel of their prophet-leader.

Others did not learn so quickly or so well. These individuals continued in their old ways despite what the Prophet had taught them. Those who maintained their independence and their disposition to ignore prophetic counsel had cause to regret their decision, some of them immediately. On Wednesday, June 4, as a result of the scarcity of food, the men went searching for almost anything edible. That created a dangerous situation because enemies of the Church lingered close to the camp. With the men scattered, the whole camp was more vulnerable to attack, not to mention the individuals who were out searching for food.

Some men found on a sandbar some eggs they believed to be turtle eggs and highly edible. The Prophet Joseph, however, said that they were not turtle eggs but snake eggs, which, if consumed, would make the men ill. The men preferred their own reasoning to the Prophet's counsel. Again the Prophet warned the men against eating the eggs, but they persisted, probably driven to disobedience because of hunger as well as an unwillingness to hearken to prophetic counsel. The men who ate the eggs provided again substantial evidences of the prophetic role of Joseph Smith, because they became violently ill upon consuming the eggs.⁴⁰

The Prophet protected forms of life other than snakes. Men were sometimes required to walk rather than continually overburden the horses. Sylvester Smith, the "chronic complainer" of the camp, was enraged when a dog in the camp snarled at him. His emotions out of control, he threatened to kill the dog if it bit him. The Prophet, having already dealt with Sylvester's insolence on several previous occasions, promised him that if he killed the dog, he, the Prophet, would

whip him.⁴¹ Further, the Prophet warned Smith that he had a wicked spirit, which if it continued unchecked, would lead to the literal as well as the spiritual destruction of Sylvester Smith. Although Sylvester continued to be the camp's self-appointed critic, complainer, and gadfly, finally, after the camp was disbanded, he did repent, made himself available, and was useful in Church service.

Although these examples are in some respects simple and perhaps largely insignificant to the outcome of Zion's Camp as a whole, they demonstrate that the Prophet was attempting to teach lessons with far greater value and significance to the individuals than it might seem at first. The lessons he was teaching included valuable information that his followers could use the rest of their lives.

The Prophet was determined to teach the marchers the sin and senselessness of unnecessary and wasteful killing of harmless animals. He recorded: "I came up to the brethren who were watching a squirrel on a tree, and to prove them and to know if they would heed my counsel, I took one of their guns, shot the squirrel and passed on, leaving the squirrel on the ground. Brother Orson Hyde, who was just behind, picked up the squirrel, and said, 'We will cook this, that nothing may be lost.' I perceived that the brethren understood what I did it for, and in their practice gave more heed to my precept than to my example, which was right."⁴²

The Prophet's teachings were important to those who were willing to learn; however, not all had ears to hear. Upon the arrival of the camp in Missouri and the declaration by the Lord through the Prophet that the time had not yet come for the redemption of Zion (see D&C 105:9), some of the men expressed great anger and resentment at the prospect of not being allowed to destroy the life of another human being. "Soon after this revelation was given several of the brethren apostatized because they were not going to have the privilege of fighting."⁴³ They had not heard the Lord's counsel; neither had they learned the important lesson of the sanctity of life. Instead, as Nathan Tanner recorded, they felt that "they would rather die than return without a fight." Instead of making necessary preparations to return to Kirtland, Ohio, to family, friends, and additional service to the Church, some of the unhappy participants "became angry . . . drew their swords and went a short distance from the camp

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and gave vent to their wrath on a patch of Pawpaw brush, and mowed them down like grass."⁴⁴

JOSEPH SMITH AS A LATTER-DAY MOSES

Zion's Camp, often called the Camp of Israel, has been compared to the camp of the former-day children of Israel, so it seems fair to compare the latter-day Prophet Joseph Smith to the great prophet Moses. The Lord does just that in citing the call and affirming the work of the latter-day Joseph (see D&C 28:2; 1 Nephi 22:20; D&C 103:16).

In reading journals and other materials on Zion's Camp, I am impressed, as were the journalists, with the great spiritual prowess of the Prophet Joseph, whose spiritual magnanimity was evidenced in his travels with Zion's Camp. A few insights into his spiritual attributes will benefit us all either by way of hearing them for the first time or in reviewing the experiences again.

Already recounted are the experiences of protection and intervention by the Lord to protect His covenant people. The Prophet was likewise protected, generally along with the others, but more specifically as the Lord's anointed. During the outbreak of cholera, the Prophet's sympathies were with those who were afflicted. Already recounted are the grief and tender feelings he had for those who succumbed to the disease—he loved them in spite of their having brought down upon themselves the judgments of God. The Prophet's sympathies were such that he seems to have interfered with the directed course of Deity, and as a result he suffered severe consequences.

"June 24. This night the cholera burst forth among us, and about midnight it was manifested in its most virulent form. Our ears were saluted with cries and moanings, and lamentations on every hand. . . . At the commencement, I attempted to lay on hands for their recovery, but I quickly learned by painful experience, that when the great Jehovah decrees destruction upon any people, and makes known His determination, man must not attempt to stay His hand. The moment I attempted to rebuke the disease I was attacked, and had I not desisted in my attempt to save the life of a brother, I would have sacrificed my own. The disease seized upon me like the talons of

a hawk, and I said to the brethren: 'If my work were done, you would have to put me in the ground without a coffin.'⁴⁵

The same reasoning could also be used to explain the preservation of the Saints by means of the terrific storms while they were camped between the Fishing rivers. The Prophet Joseph had a promise of life until his work was finished, and his allusion to his life being spared because his work was not yet finished is significant.

Miracles. Holy writ and modern prophets alike testify that miracles will attend the administration of a true prophet. Several participants referred in their journals to examples of the miracles that attended the camp. From the Juvenile Instructor in 1883 come the reminiscences of marcher Hiram Winters. Brother Winters recorded: "About four days before we were disbanded, our company ran short of provisions. We ate the last bite for breakfast. I applied at the commissary wagon for something for dinner, but received nothing, for the very good reason that it was empty. During the day, however, Joseph Hancock, while hunting, killed a deer, and, just after coming into camp at night, sent us about two pounds of venison. This, together with a two-pound loaf of bread . . . had to serve as supper for twelve men.

"The meat and bread were divided into equal parts [about 2.6 ounces each] and passed to the company. By the blessing of the Lord we all ate till we were satisfied, and there was some left."⁴⁶

Warnings. Frequently the Prophet was warned about the precarious position of the camp. At times he would wake up his fellow marchers and insist that they move to a better location. On other occasions, he would go to the woods or other natural covering and beseech the Lord for safety, returning to the camp with the prophetic assurance that all would be well through the night, even though the enemies of the Saints lurked about them.⁴⁷ Luke Johnson recounted, "Our enemies oft tried to come upon us and destroy us, but the Lord by his providence as oft defeated them."⁴⁸

Prophecy. The gift of prophecy likewise played an important role in the survival of the camp of Israel and in their success. On numerous occasions the Prophet would prophesy. "At dinner time some of the brethren expressed considerable fear on account of milk sickness, with which the people were troubled along our route. Many were afraid to use milk or butter, and appealed to me to know if it was not

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dangerous. I told them to use all they could get, unless they were told it was 'sick.' Some expressed fears that it might be sold to us by our enemies for the purpose of doing us injury. I told them not to fear; that if they would follow my counsel, and use all they could get from friend or enemy, it should do them good, and none be sick in consequence of it."⁴⁹

With this promise and others that he gave the camp, the Prophet warned men not to trifle with the principle or to tempt the Lord. The Prophet recorded, "Although we passed through neighborhoods where many of the people and cattle were infected with the sickness, yet my words were fulfilled."⁵⁰

Healing. Except for when the Prophet was seized with sickness while trying to heal another, he manifested a great ability to heal and be healed. Brother Burr Riggs was taken ill while standing guard over the camp. His military supervisor recounted: "I was sergeant of the night-guards, with instructions to see each guard every fifteen minutes, and speak to him in a whisper and receive a reply.

"The last night, about twelve o'clock, in going the third round, Burr Riggs was missing from his post. I found his body behind a log that lay about a rod away, as stiff as the log itself. Calling to Alexander Whiteside, I asked him to carry the body to his tent while I went for Joseph. We lifted the body to his shoulder and it still remained perfectly straight. I soon found Joseph and Hyrum and F. G. Williams, who administered to him; and it was not over fifteen minutes from the time I found him till he was back at his post."⁵¹

Visions. "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18). Several visions of the Prophet are recounted during the march toward Missouri. One example was related by Nathan Tanner: "I had the pleasure of seeing him in a vision when he saw the country over which we had traveled in a high state of cultivation. This was while he was riding, and when he camped, he had a wagon run out in the middle of the corral of wagons, and got up into it, and told the camp what he had seen while in the Spirit. It was glorious and grand to hear."⁵² There may have been many other such events that were not recorded or even known by most in the camp.

Prophetic insight. Other instances represent the spiritual and prophetic powers of Joseph Smith. Young George A. Smith remembered: "I got into the wagon to ride a short distance with Presidents

Joseph and Hyrum Smith and Brother Ezra Thayer. We were traveling through a thicket of small timber of recent growth. Brother Joseph said, 'I feel very much depressed in spirits; there has been a great deal of bloodshed here at some time. When a man of God passes through a place where much blood has been shed he will feel depressed in spirits and feel lonesome and uncomfortable.'"⁵³

The cause of the Prophet's depression later was determined by the finding of a large hill covered with holes exposing human bones. Brother Hyrum Smith suggested that "he believed that a great army had some time been slain and piled up and covered with earth, an ancient manner of burying the dead from a battlefield. The country around for miles was level."⁵⁴

Example. A final illustration of Joseph Smith's prophetic stature and standing within the camp of Israel was his example to the other members of the camp. Despite discouragement, disobedience, grumbling, sickness, and low morale the Prophet never seemed to lose perspective. "In addition to the care of providing for the camp and presiding over it, he [Joseph] walked most of the time and had a full proportion of blistered bloody and sore feet, which was the natural result of walking from 25 to 40 miles a day in a hot season of the year."⁵⁵ On one occasion, the Prophet gave a pair of shoes to his cousin George A. Smith, who was ill prepared for the march.

"During the entire trip he [Joseph] never uttered a murmur or complaint, while most of the men in the Camp complained to him of sore toes, blistered feet, long drives, scanty supply of provisions, poor quality of bread, bad corn dodger, frouzy butter, strong honey, maggoty bacon and cheese, &c., even a dog could not bark at some men without their murmuring at Joseph. If they had to camp with bad water it would nearly cause rebellion, yet we were the Camp of Zion, and many of us were prayerless, thoughtless, careless, heedless, foolish or devilish and yet we did not know it. Joseph had to bear with us and tutor us, like children. There were many, however, in the Camp who never murmured and who were always ready and willing to do as our leaders desired."⁵⁶

Like King David or Alexander the Great, the Prophet Joseph would not allow himself special privileges that were not also available to his men. He ate the same food they ate, he walked the same distances they walked, he slept in the same tents they used, and he refused spe-

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cial treatment for himself or others unless through empathy he attempted to make another's burden lighter. "At noon, the Prophet discovered that a part of [the] mess had been served with sour bread, while he had received good sweet bread from the same cook, whom he reproved for this partiality, saying, 'He wanted his brethren to fare as well as he did, and preferred to eat his portion of sour bread with them.'"⁵⁷ Further, we have accounts of the Prophet eating meat that others believed to be spoiled and taking his turn at difficult tasks, in addition to his rigorous responsibilities of leadership.

The Lord through the Prophet promised the Saints protection and preservation if certain things were accomplished. Most of the marchers adhered to some of the conditions, and a few of the marchers met most of the conditions, but as a camp they were not obedient to all of the particulars.

A few of the participants apostatized after Zion's Camp. They had various reasons, including not getting to fight, personal disgruntlements, disillusionment, and so forth, but the great majority of the camp members remained faithful and many of them became very productive leaders in the Church. Approximately seven months later, in February 1835, the Prophet, having returned to Kirtland with most of the marchers, asked Brigham and Joseph Young to assemble the veterans of Zion's Camp for a mission reunion of sorts. Incidentally, this practice, although interrupted for a time, was reinstated after the Saints arrived in the West, and the reunions were held for several years while there was a sizable group of its participants still living. From the assembled veterans in February 1835, the Prophet laid his hands on the heads of the Three Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, whose responsibility it was to select the Twelve Apostles.⁵⁸ After the blessing, the witnesses retired from the group for about an hour and then returned with the names of those chosen. Nine of the original Twelve Apostles in this dispensation had served faithfully during the trek of Zion's Camp.

CONCLUSION

The success of Zion's Camp cannot be determined solely by whether or not its initial objectives were met. Other important factors must be considered. We believe that Zion will yet be redeemed in the Lord's wisdom and on His timetable. During the weeks that

Zion's Camp marched toward Missouri, the Lord convincingly manifested sufficient power through the elements and through His servants to show that He could redeem Zion at any time if the redemption of Zion simply meant returning the Saints to their lands. The timetable was His, the means of fulfillment were known to Him, and He showed that neither the mobs nor anyone else was a match for His power. Independence, Missouri, was the desired destination, but the creation of a Zion society was the ultimate objective. According to Elder Neal A. Maxwell, "God is more concerned with growth than with geography. Thus, those who marched in Zion's Camp were not exploring the Missouri countryside but their own possibilities."⁵⁹ Looked at in this light, then, we may conclude that Zion's Camp was ideally named because—

1. The camp was made up of a group of Latter-day Saints who were individually committed to creating Zion by establishing the kingdom of God on earth. Furthermore, they willingly consecrated all that they had, including their lives if necessary, to see the Lord's ideal realized.
2. Participants were obedient in agreeing to go to the revealed center place of Zion to fulfill the will of the Master as revealed by His servant, the Prophet Joseph Smith.
3. Camp members were taught and tested on such principles as unity, obedience to counsel, consecration, brotherly love, sacredness of life, and so forth. These characteristics were necessary prerequisites to living together in peace, whether or not the ultimate objectives were realized at that time. These principles are likewise necessary wherever the Lord's people live.
4. The participants in Zion's Camp were being tried, stretched, refined, tutored, and tested like Abraham of old to determine their obedience to the Lord in all things. Abraham was obedient to the Lord's command, and likewise, the participants in Zion's Camp were generally obedient.

Furthermore, the march of Zion's Camp was a veritable "School of the Prophets," for many of the marchers later became leaders. They received virtually the same instruction, manifestations, and spiritual outpouring as did the members of the School of the Prophets held in the Whitney Store in Kirtland.

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Zion's Camp was to the dispensation of the fulness of times as the camp of the children of Israel was to the dispensation of the days of Moses. Both experiences showed the extent of God's patience and His love to bring a covenant people from where they were to where they needed to be. Both experiences exemplify that "of him unto whom much is given much is required" (D&C 82:3).

The expedition of Zion's Camp illustrated that God will fight the battles of His chosen people and intervene for their welfare.

The march of Zion's Camp was a preparatory phase, in which future Church leaders were tutored against a day when specific skills and personalities were needed to—

1. Lead the Saints from Ohio to Missouri in a group known as Kirtland Camp.
2. Lead the Saints from Illinois to settlements in Iowa and Nebraska in a group known as the Camp of Israel.
3. Lead the Saints from Winter Quarters, Nebraska, to the Great Basin.
4. Provide a pattern for leadership for many thousands of emigrant Saints to follow in subsequent years as they came from all parts of the earth.

Zion's Camp was a means of identifying, teaching, and testing future leaders of the Church. Of the first twenty-five Apostles of this dispensation, including four future Church Presidents, fourteen (56 percent) were members of Zion's Camp; seven of that number were not yet members of the Church, and two others were already in Missouri. Of those available to serve, fourteen of sixteen (88 percent) participated in Zion's Camp. The leadership skills gained from Zion's Camp spanned the Church's history from 1834, when they marched, until after the dawning of the twentieth century.

When asked what they had gained by their extended absence from family, business, and personal concerns, Brigham Young responded that they had accomplished everything in Zion's Camp that they had set out to do. "I would not exchange the knowledge I have received this season for the whole of Geauga County [Ohio]."⁶⁰

Similarly, Wilford Woodruff observed on December 12, 1869: "When the members of Zion's Camp were called, many of us had never beheld each other's faces; we were strangers to each other and

many had never seen the prophet. . . . We were young men, and were called upon in that early day to go up and redeem Zion, and what we had to do we had to do by faith. . . . God accepted our works as he did the works of Abraham. We accomplished a great deal. . . . We gained an experience that we never could have gained in any other way. We had the privilege of beholding the face of the prophet, and we had the privilege of travelling a thousand miles with him, and seeing the workings of the spirit of God with him, and the revelations of Jesus Christ unto him and the fulfilment of those revelations. . . . Had I not gone up with Zion's Camp I should not have been here today, and I presume that would have been the case with many others in this Territory."⁶¹

A great blessing to the Church from these experiences is that the descendants of these two individuals are still members of the Church and are still providing support and strength for the kingdom. Those individuals were obedient then and their descendants are still being obedient to the Lord's anointed today.

Zion's Camp was the composite of some two hundred individuals' personal experiences, and, as such, the experience as a whole was greater than the sum of all of their individual experiences. In addition to the redemption of Zion, an important objective of the march was to focus the Saints involved on still higher purposes of building the kingdom of God on earth. They fought their good fight, and they have their reward. The value of Zion's Camp today as a legacy of obedient adherence to the commandments of God is determined by what we can learn from their faithfulness and the efforts we will expend in further building the kingdom in our day.

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